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Chrysler: Grand theft auto

Bankruptcy used to attack jobs, wages & pensions

By Martha Grevatt

In an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, Chrysler workers represented by the United Auto Workers voted four-to-one on April 29 to take major contract concessions. The consequence of a no vote, workers were told, would be that the company would declare bankruptcy. A yes vote would secure jobs and protect pensions through a new alliance with the Italian auto company Fiat.

Yet not even 24 hours after the ballots had been counted, Chrysler double-crossed the workers and filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. On May 4 nearly every U.S. Chrysler employee was put on layoff while the “surgical” bankruptcy reshapes Chrysler LLC into a leaner, meaner—and they are plenty mean now—“New Chrysler.”

After the workers were told their sacrifice would ensure job security, Chrysler told New York bankruptcy Judge Arthur J. Gonzalez of its plans to close eight plants

by the end of 2010. Four closings were already known, but workers at plants in Wisconsin, Michigan, Missouri and Ohio were stunned to hear their plants were now “bad assets” and up for sale. Workers at the Twinsburg, Ohio, plant voted 88 percent in favor of the concessions. They had no idea.

The workers were swindled!

The contract amendments included a letter stating, “The parties discussed the status and long term manufacturing plans for Twinsburg Stamping Plant. ... The company is committed to studying these plans with the desire that TSP remains viable. ... We appreciate the UAW’s continued support in developing a long-term viability plan for TSP.”

Sterling Heights Assembly, Kenosha Engine and St. Louis North Assembly, as well as Twinsburg, were covered by a moratorium on plant closings. This moratorium was not rescinded in the recent contract modifications. While Chrysler thanked the employees on April 30 for

passing the new contract, they promptly proceeded to trash it, their appetites whetted by the contract-busting potential of the bankruptcy courts. As of this writing the rank and file are hoping the UAW International will challenge the announced closings.

Up until the eleventh hour UAW members and the general public were led to believe that bankruptcy would be avoided. Chrysler, Fiat, the UAW, the Auto Task Force, the U.S. Treasury, the Canadian government and nearly every lender holding Chrysler’s secured debt had purportedly agreed to the plans for New Chrysler.

The lenders were the last holdout, but at the last minute JPMorgan Chase, Morgan Stanley, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs and several dozen hedge funds agreed to accept \$2.2 billion in cash payments to wipe out \$6.9 billion in loans. This is actu-

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Why Brzezinski said: ‘There could be even riots’

By Larry Hales

2009 began with a rebellion. On Jan. 7, seven days after Oscar Grant III had been shot in the back and killed by Bay Area Rapid Transit cop Johannes Mehserle, the people of Oakland, Calif., rose up and rebelled. The rebellion was short-lived. It was confined. However, it indicated that whatever distractions might exist, even the symbolic victory of the first Black president, the conditions of oppression and repression remain just as intense, and violent rebellion is still possible. The response of Oakland’s people was what pushed the city government to arrest and charge Mehserle. Before that, Mehserle had dodged questioning and fled to Nevada, where he was picked up on a fugitive warrant.

‘National Solidarity Fund’

Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was President Jimmy Carter’s national security advisor and architect of U.S. strategy in Afghanistan in the 1970s and 1980s, remarked on MSNBC in February, “And if we don’t get some sort of voluntary National Solidarity Fund, at some point there’ll be such political pressure that Congress will start getting in the act. There’s going to be growing conflict between the classes, and if people are unemployed and really hurting, hell, there could be even riots.” Brzezinski was arguing for the capitalist class and the moneyed small capitalists to band together and create a fund, which he called the “National Solidarity Fund.” The fund would be used to buy off the poor and the quickly declining middle class.

The idea is inane for a number of reasons. Its title, “National Solidarity Fund,” is a severe misuse of the word “solidarity.” Certainly it is not solidarity to give people a pittance of what you have stolen from them through exploitation, so that the inevitability of the working class and oppressed beginning to openly struggle against the conditions forced upon them is staved off for a little while longer.

Besides the obvious meaning of such a fund, it is absurd to think that the capitalists would be into giving workers and the oppressed anything. The capitalists are demanding more handouts from the federal government, with trillions of dollars robbed from working people. Brzezinski is right to expect that open conflict will arise, but the capitalist class has always been clear about its position. It has always been antagonistic. It is the waking up of the working class that Brzezinski fears. The increasing heat of class contradictions is melting away the one-sided détente. Yes, “there could be even riots.”

Since last October, many in the progressive movement have raised the specter of federal troops being used internally against people in the U.S. Some fear there could be martial law, and an Army Unit, the 3rd Infantry Division, 1st Brigade Combat Team, could be used to put down rebellions. The state apparatus is meant to stand between the exploiter and the exploited, to maintain the status quo by beating back workers and the oppressed. The government will wield the state as a hammer or sword. So fear of an infantry unit, one that has been used to beat back the resistance of the Iraqi and Afghan people against U.S. imperialism, is real.

The state, though, has many weapons. Already, a battle-hardened army with the most high-tech weaponry patrols the streets. This army occupies oppressed

communities. In some oppressed communities, such as Trinidad in Washington, D.C., this army employs checkpoints, pulling drivers over and stopping people who are walking, denying them access to neighborhoods if they can’t verify their address. This army is the police and sheriff’s departments in every city, town and village across the U.S. In New York City, the police department numbers nearly 50,000, when you add up actual police officers, auxiliaries and school safety agents. Each state also has the National Guard, which has historically been called on to put down rebellions when the police have not been able to. The National Guard was used during the Los Angeles rebellion in 1992, with troops patrolling in armored personnel carriers. The state has many means of repression: the police, the military, courts, jails and prisons. While it is right to fear the implementation of the various state agencies, one cannot necessarily anticipate their use against the movement.

The state exists for the uses of the ruling class. Some have decried the federalization of the army brigade for domestic use as a violation of the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, but it won’t be the first time. Historically, Posse Comitatus was never used progressively but was a compromise between Northern finance capitalists and the Southern former slave masters. Federal troops were pulled from the South, ending Reconstruction and leaving Blacks to fend for themselves in the face of a well-equipped tide of right-wing paramilitary groups. Struggle happens, and struggle in the interests of working and oppressed people can use whatever means the people in the struggle deem necessary to protect themselves. Oakland, a city that has a rich history of struggle, signaled that violence in this era is still in the equation and will always be.

The key is solidarity, which means white workers must stand in support of the most oppressed and support their right to self-defense and to fight for liberation by any means. In the current climate, where the decadence of bourgeois society grows fouler and white workers have seen beyond racism to elect a Black president, the possibility of broad working-class unity appears great. This unity does not erase the demand of the oppressed for self-determination, but that demand will grow stronger as racism intensifies to divide workers. The demand itself strengthens the overall movement against the brutal capitalist system. Millions of people have lost their jobs and homes. Imperialist war wages on, with threats of more. The contradictions are starker than ever, but the possibility of open struggle is looking up. □

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

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Book release, birthday events in Solidarity with Mumia Abu-Jamal

By Betsey Piette

Award-winning journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal's sixth book, "Jailhouse Lawyers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners v. the U.S.A.," written from death row, pays tribute to prisoners who became self-taught lawyers to help defend the rights of other prisoners who would otherwise be denied legal representation.

On April 24 and 25, the book was presented in over a dozen cities across the U.S. to open a new stage in the battle for Abu-Jamal's life and freedom. These events also commemorated Mumia's April 24 birthday shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court denied a review of his case.

In **Harlem** over 200 people packed a room at Riverside Church April 25 at a program chaired by Sundiata Sadiq and Suzanne Ross, leaders of the New York Free Mumia Coalition.

The speakers included Pam Africa, leader of International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal; Ramona Africa, a former jailhouse lawyer and the sole adult survivor of the 1985 MOVE bombing in Philadelphia by federal and local authorities; Brother Amin, aka Harold Wilson, who was exonerated after 16 years on death row with Mumia at SCI Greene prison; Paul Wright and Mika'il

Deveaux, former jailhouse lawyers; and Jamal Joseph, who was a Black Panther 21 defendant during the early 1970s.

Former political prisoner Angela Davis was shown on video and spoke about the foreword that she wrote for Mumia's book. Cultural performances were provided by The Welfare Poets and the Academy Award-nominated Impact Repertory Theatre, the singing, dancing and spoken-word youth group.

In **Philadelphia** over 200 people gathered on April 24 to culminate a week of events focusing on political prisoners under the theme "Revolutionary Week: We who believe in freedom cannot wait. We educate!"

Chaired by former political prisoner Ramona Africa, the meeting featured such entertainers as poet Sonia Sanchez, jazz trumpet soloist Kenneth Taylor, the African American Dance Ensemble, and Goldi, daughter of Mumia and Wadiya.

Speakers included Paul Wright, editor of Prison Legal News, who said laws were "codified by judges to serve the ruling class." Temple professor Linn Washington Jr. described the many contradictory court rulings on local, state and federal levels used to deny justice for Abu-Jamal.

In **San Diego**, a celebration of life, courage and struggle honoring Abu-Jamal

was held at the Malcolm X library on April 24. All present signed a hand-decorated card for Mumia and heard a birthday greeting from Assata Shakur.

Gloria Verdieu read Selma James' message from "Jailhouse Lawyers." Asian American Women's Alliance members were there in support and solidarity with Mumia, who is an honorary member of their organization.

Many who attended also marched on May Day and then made their way to the World Beat Center in San Diego's Balboa Park. The video "In Prison My Whole Life" was shown there before a concert. Many people were not aware of some information presented in this video, which traces the events leading up to Mumia's arrest and conviction with new photos and evidence.

Sylvia Telafaro, president of AAWA, read a poem for Mumia, and Eliote Lieb gave an update on Mumia's case. The band Wadi said the struggle to free Mumia and all political prisoners must continue.

In **Houston** on April 25, a multi-national crowd filling the S.H.A.P.E. Center's auditorium was thrilled to hear Mumia's strong voice greet them via an audio recording he did for those gather-



ing around the country for his birthday.

Njeri Shakur, an organizer with the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement that sponsored the evening, told the audience, "It is so important that we are here, united, to stand up for Mumia and continue to build the broad movement that will free him." Long-time civil rights activist Ester King, Black Panther Ayanna Ade, and gay rights and prison activist Ray Hill read from the just-released book.

Three long-time local activists also read from the book and paid tribute to three Texas writ writers. The room was totally quiet and many had tears in their eyes as former prisoners Bobby Mudd, Black Panther Sensei Benton and activist Prince Imari Obadele told of their life in prison and how they fought the system by working on their own cases as well as those of other prisoners.

A moving tribute was paid to Texas's most famous jailhouse lawyer, David Ruiz, whose 1978-79 civil trial was the longest in U.S. jurisprudence history. At his trial, 110 prisoners testified at great risk, and were able to force the legal system to listen. Chapter 7 in Mumia's book is about Ruiz and the changes he made in Texas prisons.

Monica Moorehead, Gloria Verdieu and Gloria Rubac contributed to this report. Jailhouse Lawyers available Leftbooks.com

'A clear-cut case of retribution' Progressive reporter convicted of felonies

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

Freelance journalist Diane Bukowski, whose byline appears frequently in The Michigan Citizen newspaper, was convicted May 1 on two felony charges stemming from her involvement as a reporter on the scene of a deadly police chase in Detroit on Nov. 4. She will be sentenced on June 1, and faces a possible four-year prison term.

A majority-white, suburban-based jury found Bukowski guilty of two counts of "assaulting/resisting/obstructing" state police officers as she and other reporters gathered to cover a police chase that resulted in the deaths of a motorcyclist and pedestrian.

Bukowski was arrested as she attempted to photograph the grisly scene and after a state trooper yelled to her, "Who the f**k do you think you are?" Police confiscated her camera, deleted her photos and claimed Bukowski had crossed yellow crime-scene tape, which she denies.

Bukowski was originally charged with one misdemeanor count of obstructing an investigation. But Wayne County prosecutor Kym Worthy charged Bukowski with five felony counts that totaled a possible sentence of 20 years in prison. The prosecutor's office later dropped three of the charges.

Bukowski and The Michigan Citizen, a Detroit-based weekly addressed to African Americans and the progressive community, have a history of successfully fighting for access to public documents from the prosecutor's office in police brutality and murder cases. Bukowski has written dozens of stories chronicling police brutality, prosecutorial misconduct and police murders in Detroit. She is well-known in the community as a strong anti-racist fighter and reporter on issues involving foreclo-

tures, utility shutoffs and union struggles.

The railroading of Bukowski on trumped-up charges aroused strong community support from unionists, political leaders and community organizers who formed the Committee to Defend Diane Bukowski and Freedom of the Press. Bukowski and her supporters say this is a clear-cut case of retribution by the cops and prosecutor for her role in exposing the many injustices of the criminal justice system.

Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Michael Hathaway entertained a motion from Assistant Prosecutor Thomas Trzcinski to "preclude argument, the asking of questions, and the introduction of any other evidence purporting to show that defendant was acting in her capacity as a reporter during the events in question." Hathaway partially granted the motion in what Bukowski and her supporters regard as a clear violation of the First Amendment.

CONNECTICUT

Student anti-war conference links war at home, abroad

By Larry Hales
Middletown, Conn.

More than 70 people, mostly students, participated in the founding conference of Connecticut Students Against the War on April 25 at Wesleyan University.

Many groups endorsed the conference. They include Iraq Vets Against the War, Youth for Socialist Action, Food Not Bombs, the ANSWER Coalition, the National Lawyers Guild, International Socialist Organization, and FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together.



From left, City Councilwoman JoAnn Watson, David Sole and Diane Bukowski.

WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

Fox 2 News video was shown three times to the jury; it did not show Bukowski in any manner resisting, assaulting or obstructing the police.

The Michigan statute on impeding a police investigation includes the mere "opposing" of the police as grounds for felony charges. This onerous law subjects anyone to arrest and felony charges who in any way challenges the police.

"I'm a felon now," said Bukowski. "This is the price you pay when you stand up against such monsters." She called for a federal investigation of the prosecutor's office. (Michigan Messenger, May 1)

A meeting to organize further support for Bukowski and her appeal will take place May 7 at the offices of The Michigan Citizen. Every anti-racist and progressive activist in Michigan has a stake in the final outcome of this case. □

Panels were held on the occupation of Iraq, the war in Afghanistan, the occupation of Palestine and the crisis in Gaza, the economic crisis, and U.S. military and economic interventions. Breakout discussions at each panel formulated proposals to present to the broader group and to be voted on as part of the CTSAW program.

At the economic crisis panel, Jaimeson Champion of the youth group FIST gave an overview of the capitalist crisis and explained how crisis is built into the capitalist system. Peter Goselin of People's Bailout Connecticut spoke about the need

for struggle, for people to defend their right to a home and jobs, and about Fred Goldstein's book "Low-Wage Capitalism."

The dozen participants in the economic crisis panel proposed that CTSAW raise demands for a massive jobs program, housing for all, free education and job training, health care for all and access to media.

The conference was a success and showed that the students involved understood the linkage of imperialist war to the war being waged against workers and the oppressed at home. □

Stocks up, economy down

By Fred Goldstein

Economic activity in the United States shrank by 6.1 percent in the first quarter of 2009. That made this the worst recession in 50 years, with three consecutive quarters of sharp economic decline. The decline was worse than predicted by economists, who had projected 4.7 percent.

Yet the stock market continued to surge right past this news. Why? Because investors seized upon a slight growth in housing purchases and construction.

There is one capitalist economy in the United States. But there are two basic classes in society—the bosses and the workers—with the middle class in between. It is clearly the representatives of the bosses that are running the stock market and writing the economic headlines.

For the bosses, recovery means getting their sales and profits back up. For the workers, recovery means getting jobs back, getting foreclosed homes back, earning a living wage, health care and some measure of economic security.

If the working class were writing the headlines and broadcasting the network and cable news, there would be few words about impending recovery. Instead, the prime-time news would give the statistics on how this disaster is getting worse.

Jobs, housing, health care worse

In the week ending April 25, some 631,000 more workers applied for unemployment insurance, bringing the total to an all-time record of 6.27 million. All 372 metropolitan areas in the U.S. had increases in joblessness compared to a year ago. What is not mentioned is that the eligibility for unemployment insurance is so restrictive that 20 million additional workers, who are either unemployed or underemployed, are getting no benefits at all.

It is estimated that one in nine housing units—14 million in all—are vacant. A total of 803,489 properties received a default or auction notice or were seized in

the first quarter, the highest since records began four years ago. (Bloomberg.com, May 4) As to the increase in purchases of existing homes—the number that helped drive up the stock market—50 percent of the purchases were by speculators picking up foreclosed homes for resale.

The crisis in unemployment has made the crisis of health care worse. It is estimated, based on U.S. Census Bureau data, that 2.4 million people have lost employer-sponsored health care since the downturn began in December 2007. Approximately 1.3 million of these losses have occurred in the last four months—more than 320,000 in March alone. (AmericanProgress.org)

The talk of recovery comes on the heels of the announcement by General Motors that it intends to lay off 47,000 workers worldwide. Some 23,000 layoffs and 13 plant closings will be in the United States. Wall Street regards it as positive news that Chrysler, under cover of bankruptcy, will close eight factories. In fact, 71 percent of CEOs are planning more layoffs in the coming six months.

It is not only the auto bosses who are shrinking industry. ArcelorMittal, the largest steel company in the world, is dismantling steel mills in Lackawanna, N.Y., and Hennepin, Ill., even though other companies want to buy both plants. Some 260 workers in Lackawanna have to stand by and watch their custom-built plant be dismantled as part of ArcelorMittal's corporate strategy to sustain profits as steel production contracts worldwide.

There is already 25 to 30 percent unemployment in the Lackawanna-Buffalo area. The chance of getting another job anywhere near the \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year steelworkers were making is virtually nil. The same scenario took place in Hennepin, near Chicago, where 285 workers will be thrown out so that ArcelorMittal can ship part of the operation to Brazil and the rest to France.

These examples show what is going on with the shrinking of the U.S. capitalist economy overall. It is driven by the increas-

ing productivity of labor. Increasing the productivity of labor is the primary way that capitalists have of increasing the exploitation of labor. It makes workers produce more in less time at the same or sometimes even lower wages. More goods must then be sold by each company at a faster rate in order to keep up profitability and pay for their technology.

This creates the crisis that is unique to capitalism: the crisis of overproduction. With high productivity of labor alongside wages that generally remain at the basic survival level under capitalism, sooner or later the working class cannot purchase what it produces and plants and stores shut down. Marxist economics explains this crisis of overproduction and its inevitability under capitalism.

Bosses are deliberately shrinking economy

This is why the bosses are now forced to shrink the economy. Take Cerberus Corp., which bought Chrysler and is now handing it over to Fiat. Last fall Cerberus, through its NewPage subsidiary, shut down a high-tech paper mill in Kimberly, Wis. According to Andy Nirschl, president of United Steel Workers Local 2-9, Cerberus wanted to raise paper prices and boost its profits by reducing capacity and throwing 600 workers out of their jobs. This was in spite of the fact that four companies wanted to buy the plant. (Dollars & Sense online, March/April, "Corporate America's Counter-Stimulus Strategy")

"This wasn't like the usual scenario we've seen again and again," said Nirschl, "where a corporation moves jobs to Mexico or China to increase their profits by paying less than a dollar an hour. This was a case of a corporation taking a productive, profitable plant and closing it, refusing to sell it to anyone."

This new trend of shrinking the economy is of the greatest importance to the working class. The destruction of perfectly good factories, stores and other facilities in order to maintain profitability and deal

with capitalist overproduction means that, even in the event of a stabilization of the economy or some sort of capitalist recovery, the crisis of the working class will remain.

U.S. capitalism has entered a new stage which has been masked by years of stock market and housing bubble speculation and is now obscured by the downturn. But in less-publicized news the partial truth is beginning to come out.

Bloomberg.com recently ran a piece entitled "'Great Recession' Will Redefine Full Employment as Jobs Vanish." The term "Great Recession" is a quote from Paul Volcker, former head of the Federal Reserve Board, who presided over the Carter and Reagan recessions of 1980 and 1982.

The article said a new discussion is taking place on the so-called "natural" rate of unemployment based on the permanent destruction of jobs. To the workers "full employment" means everyone has a job. To the bosses, because they keep a permanent reserve army of unemployed workers at all times, full employment means millions without jobs as long as enough are working to keep the profits rolling in.

This kind of "full employment" used to mean a jobless rate of 3 percent. Then it started creeping up to 4 percent, 5 percent and so on. In the wake of the present crisis, the number is climbing steeply. Edmund Phelps, a professor at Columbia University in New York and winner of the 2006 Nobel Prize in economics, says that fallout from the recession implies a "markedly higher" rate of unemployment. "It was 5.5 percent; maybe it will be 6.5 percent, maybe 7 percent."

Another economics professor, this one at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, said that unemployment may peak at 10 percent and "It will be a long time before we see 5 percent" again.

It is important to note how many times the words "may" and "maybe" are used in bourgeois economists' projections of future "normal" unemployment. It shows

Chrysler bankruptcy used to attack jobs, wages

Continued from page 1

ally twice the market value of the loans, which currently fetch prices of 15 cents on the dollar.

Yet this deal, which would double the value of their investment, was rejected by just three hedge funds—Oppenheimer, Stairway Capital and Perella Weinberg. The Chrysler debt they hold represents a mere sliver of their diverse portfolio and is likely not more than a few hundred million dollars.

How could their recalcitrant stance, as loathsome as it was, make bankruptcy unavoidable? Why couldn't the Auto Task Force, led by former investment bankers Steve Rattner and Ron Bloom, have extended the 30-day period they initially set for Chrysler to develop a more aggressive restructuring? It could have insisted Chrysler adopt the same firm "take it or leave it" stand with the three holdout vultures that it took with the UAW and the Canadian Auto Workers.

The CAW gave up \$19 per hour worth of concessions after Chrysler threatened to pull out of Canada completely.

Yet the Treasury, rather than use its financial and political leverage to soften the company's attitude, took the same hard line towards the union. It was the Treasury that dictated an expansion of the two-tier wage structure agreed to in 2007, freezing "entry level" wages at \$14 an hour until 2015.

The capitalist class as a whole clearly holds a consensus on this latest theft of union wages and benefits and is determined to see a much smaller U.S. auto industry. For months in Washington and on Wall Street, voices clamored for bankruptcy—both Democrats and Republicans.

The stated purpose of the sale of eight plants is to raise capital to pay back the big banks and the equity firms. The banks, which opted to unload a portion of their Chrysler loans to sharks such as Oppenheimer, have received nearly \$100 billion through the government bailout. Yet thousands of workers will be either unemployed or forced to relocate so JPMorgan Chase and company can get paid another couple billion.

The whole purpose of the loans was to finance the previous round of restructuring that has shrunk the Chrysler workforce by almost 50 percent in less than two years—leaving just 27,000 UAW workers at the company.

Yet the corporate media have run feature stories on what a good deal the UAW has supposedly gotten. This myth is being constructed around the 55-percent share of the new company to be held by the Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association. The UAW-administered VEBA was agreed to in 2007 to fund retiree health care. Does this mean the UAW now owns a majority stake in the company with which it bargains?

Does it now have the ability, as a voting shareholder, to control the corporation?

Not exactly. The VEBA will be directed by a "trustee" who will appoint just one member to the New Chrysler board of directors. Three members will be appointed by the Treasury, three by Fiat, one by the Canadian government and one by the lender—all of whom will have a smaller stake in the company than the VEBA. All the VEBA's equity will be in nonvoting stock, and as Fiat's stake in New Chrysler grows, the VEBA's will diminish.

Left out of press reports is that the VEBA itself was a big concession on the part of the workers. What drove Chrysler (and also Ford and General Motors) to set up the fund was the desire to eliminate "legacy costs"—compensation to retirees who are no longer exploitable. With the VEBA the companies were to pay a set amount but would be free of future legacy costs. It was a big break for the companies and a gamble for the union. Plus, workers in the plants gave up much of their cost-of-living allowance and other compensation to cover the cost of the VEBA.

Then, as a condition of last year's bailout, the Treasury forced a second concession on the union. Half of the VEBA was now to be paid in company stock. Stock prices could fall, jeopardizing the health benefits the retirees earned working years on the assembly lines. The VEBA is not yet

in operation and already retirees have had vision and dental coverage taken away.

Union members are getting nothing from this rotten arrangement. They have given up holidays, break time, time-and-a-half after eight hours, COLA, bonuses that were themselves a concession in lieu of annual raises, benefits for laid-off workers and more. These were precedent-setting achievements won through decades of struggle, and came on top of major give-backs in the original 2007-2011 contract.

The hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of concessions represent a transfer of wealth from the working class to the capitalists. Autoworkers are blocked from striking from now until the end of the next contract in September 2015.

For all this workers were given assurance that the alliance with Fiat "could result in incremental product loading in the Company's assembly and powertrain operations" and that there would be "no termination of pension plans covering UAW-represented employees and retirees." The first promise crumbled with the latest plant closing announcements. The second, addressing a legitimate concern, could prove false too if the bankrupt company is exempted from making payments to the pension fund.

Rather than mobilize the rank and file to protest this outrage perpetrated against the workers, UAW International presi-

Swine flu—pigs & profits

By Hillel Cohen

that they have no way of predicting what will happen in the capitalist economy, which is unplanned and based on the anarchy of production. They see the trend in a purely pragmatic way, having no scientific theory to guide them, as do Marxists.

The number of workers who don't ever expect to regain the same job is rising, as is long-term unemployment. Mass layoffs—those involving 50 or more workers—rose to a record 2,933 and involved 300,000 lost jobs. During the recession 257,000 auto jobs have been cut.

Lifetime wages are going to drop for the masses of workers, who will be forced to compete for low-wage jobs if the capitalists have their way. The so-called “job market,” the market of wage slaves for hire by the bosses, is going to shrink along with industry and services as a result of the laws of the capitalist profit system.

The only way to interfere with this process is for the rank and file of the working class, in alliance with their communities, to act in a concerted way to block the schemes of the bosses to make us their victims. It is time to follow the example of the Republic Windows and Doors workers in Chicago, who occupied their factory this winter after their boss tried to run away and set up a non-union plant in Iowa. The Bank of America had denied the company credit so the workers could not collect the benefits owed them.

Those workers were ready to sacrifice to win their struggle to put workers' rights above the property rights of the owners. It is time for the rank and file of the Chrysler and General Motors workers to break up the unholy alliance of the union leaders, the government and the company that is ripping up their contracts and killing their jobs.

There is no telling where the present economic crisis is going. The bosses have plans to keep this crisis on the backs of the workers. The only answer is for the workers to organize for struggle and take their fate into their own hands. □

& pensions

dent Ron Gettelfinger has partnered with the company, the Obama administration and the lenders. The appearance is that of a united front committed to Chrysler surviving and becoming “competitive,” only to be stymied by a few inconsequential hedge funds.

Yet Gettelfinger has no real voice. Since Ronald Reagan broke the air traffic controllers' union, a relentless drive to push down the cost of labor power has caused nothing but suffering for workers and their communities. The only way to prevent more mass suffering is with mass struggle.

The autoworkers should be staging mass protests against the layoffs, the plant closings and any further concessions. Their natural allies—the real stakeholders—number in the millions.

They work in auto parts companies where every week a new bankruptcy is announced. They work in rubber, steel, glass, plastics, utilities, construction, retail, food service and government—because what happens in auto affects the whole economy. They live in once-thriving communities now hit by double-digit unemployment.

Only a broad working-class movement can beat back the bosses' attacks.

E-mail: mgrevatt@workers.org. Grevatt is a 21-year Chrysler worker and executive board member of UAW Local 122 in Twinsburg, Ohio.

After a week where fear of a swine flu pandemic spread much faster than the virus itself, the media hype is starting to slow down. The virus is showing up in more parts of the world, but the number of cases, and more importantly, the number of hospitalizations and deaths, appear to be less than what was originally projected.

It's still too soon to predict how widespread and deadly this new variation of influenza virus will be. Meanwhile, controversy is growing about how the new virus got started.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests that the genetic strain was first seen in hog farms in the U.S. in 1998. However, the current outbreak seems to have started in Mexican towns near a huge factory-farm pig operation owned by the U.S. corporate giant Smithfield and operated by its Mexican subsidiary Granjas Carroll de México. A 2006 article in Rolling Stone magazine estimated that Smithfield alone produced 26 million tons of animal waste a year—the byproduct of over \$11 billion in sales.

Local residents of La Gloria and Perote in the Mexican state of Veracruz have been fighting the pork-breeding giant for years. The factory-farm was first set up in 1994, soon after the beginning of the North American Free Trade Agreement. NAFTA allowed the “free” flow of capital across the border, allowing U.S. corporations to set up factories in Mexico to exploit labor there without restriction and to flood the Mexican economy with corn and other commodities. Some believe Smithfield set up the hog plants in Mexico to avoid even the weak regulations in the U.S.

Producing close to a million hogs per year, the company maintains huge lagoons of hog manure as well as open-air dumps

for the rotting remains of hogs that die before being slaughtered. Fumes from the hog waste foul the air for miles and residents believe that their ground water may be contaminated. Swarms of flies that feed on the manure infest the nearby towns.

It is well known that flies can spread avian flu by carrying infected bird droppings from place to place. It is possible that the flies feeding and breeding in the hog manure were also in contact with bird droppings and became the mechanism of mixing virus material from hogs, birds and humans that may have triggered or accelerated the outbreak.

According to reports from the Mexican newspaper La Jornada, local residents tried to block the construction of the farm as early as 2005. In 2008 several activists were arrested by the Veracruz authorities, who have worked closely with Granjas Carroll to suppress opposition to the huge hog operation.

Long before the swine flu outbreak made the international news, hundreds of La Gloria residents were complaining of severe respiratory infections, with many of these infections developing into pneumonia. Pneumonia is one of the severe complications of influenza infection. Veratect, a private U.S. company that monitors health outbreaks around the world for its subscribers, noticed the outbreak in Veracruz about a month earlier and called the CDC. With its attention still on alleged (and nonexistent) bioterrorism, the CDC apparently ignored the calls for several weeks.

The first reported confirmed case of the new swine flu virus was a young boy in La Gloria who has since recovered. The outbreak spread to Mexico City and other Mexican areas as well as New York, California, Texas and other locations in the U.S. and around the world. As of May 3, the

World Health Organization was reporting about 900 confirmed cases—more than half in Mexico—including 20 deaths (19 in Mexico and one in the U.S.).

Health officials have reported that the current strain of virus is a mix of genetic material from viruses that infect hogs and birds as well as humans. For almost a decade, world and U.S. health officials have focused on so-called avian or bird flu (labeled H5N1), which has spread around the world but has not “jumped” to human populations. Although some people contracted bird flu from close proximity to poultry and water fowl, no human-to-human transmission has been reported.

This new swine flu is a variation of H1N1, which is much more common in human flu and spreads by human-to-human transmission. At least one case of suspected human-to-pig transmission has been reported in Canada, where several hogs were found to have contracted the virus after a worker who had been in Mexico visited a hog farm.

Because the most number of cases have come from Mexico, some right-wing Fox media commentators have tried to blame Mexican immigrants for bringing the virus across the border, and may use the fear over swine flu to whip up even more immigrant bashing.

The fact that the U.S. cases seem to be among tourists or those close to tourists has so far limited the attacks on immigrants. Relatively little attention in the big-business mass media, however, has been given to the Smithfield connection or the fact that similar huge and hazardous plants can be found in North Carolina, Utah and elsewhere. Will the corporate criminals who profit from these environmental and public health disasters be held responsible?

Cohen is a doctor of public health.

Pennsylvania jury okays immigrant's lynching

By Stephen Millies

While immigrants and their supporters celebrated May Day elsewhere in the U.S., an all-white jury in Pottsville, Pa., approved the lynching of Luis Ramirez.

A gang of drunken white thugs shouting racist slurs attacked Ramirez in nearby Shenandoah last July 12. Foam ran from his mouth when Ramirez was found convulsing in the street.

The 25-year-old immigrant worker and father of three children was taken off life support two days later. His body was flown back to his mother in Guanajuato, Mexico.

Ramirez was beaten so severely that a bruised impression of Jesus from the medallion he wore was imbedded on his chest. Brains oozed from his skull.

Yet on May 1 the Schuylkill County jury found Brandon Piekarsky and Derrick Donchak guilty of only simple assault. Piekarsky was acquitted of third-degree murder and ethnic intimidation, while Donchak was acquitted of aggravated assault and ethnic intimidation.

Low-Wage Capitalism

A timely new book by Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx's law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval, the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.

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Jurors ignored the testimony of another attacker, Colin Walsh, who implicated Piekarsky and Donchak. Walsh pleaded guilty to federal charges of violating the civil rights of Ramirez.

Ramirez was lynched, like James Byrd Jr., a Black man who was dragged to death in Jasper, Texas, by white racists in 1998. Or Matthew Shepard, a gay man who was also tortured to death the same year by bigots outside Laramie, Wyo.

Back in 1955, another all-white jury in Mississippi acquitted the murderers who mutilated the 14-year-old Black youth Emmett Till. A judge in Queens, N.Y., recently let the police killers go free who fired 50 shots at Sean Bell, killing him on his wedding day.

Before he was killed, Ramirez was working two jobs to support his children, Angelina, Eduardo and Kiara. “He worked hard so his kids would have more than he had growing up,” his widow, Crystal Dillman, said. “I just don't understand how you can beat someone so badly when you don't even know them.” (CNN, July 31.)

Radio hate-mongers like Rush Lim-

baugh and Michael Savage don't know any of the immigrants whom they demonize. The immigrants working in the fields and packing plants put food on their tables.

Fifteen miles from where Ramirez was lynched, Hazelton Mayor Lou Barletta pushed through a vicious law in 2008 that prohibited renting to undocumented workers. Although a federal judge threw out this ordinance in 2009, it inflamed the hate that killed Luis Ramirez.

Tens of thousands once worked in the anthracite coalmines in the region. Some 51,483 Pennsylvania miners were killed in mining accidents since 1870. Many of the mine owners' “Main Line” mansions outside Philadelphia were built with the blood of these miners.

Anthracite coalmines have been closing for generations. As the economy declined, the wealthy promoted racism to divide workers.

By 1997 five state prisons were in the former mining counties of Luzerne, Northumberland and Schuylkill. Sometimes the only jobs available to descendants of miners are those of prison guards. There, they are in a hostile situation to inmates, whom they often brutalize. The inmates are overwhelmingly Black and Latina/o.

Despite bigots like Hazelton Mayor Barletta, many area residents expressed dismay at the brutal death of Ramirez. They need support from progressives around the country to oppose the racists. □

NYC May Day: Militant display of int’l workers’ solidarity

By Dee Knight
New York

Latina/o workers, along with workers originally from Asia, Africa, the Americas and Europe, marched united on Broadway in New York on May Day 2009, in an event organized by the May 1st Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights. Intermittent torrential rains drenched the demonstrators, but could not dampen their spirits. Thousands gathered and marched, waving colorful flags and holding beautiful banners. A festive air—complete with dancers, musicians and drummers—was mixed with a defiant, determined mood: “¡Aquí estamos, y nos quedamos, y si nos echan, regresamos!” (“We’re here, and we’re staying, and if they throw us out, we’ll be back!”)

There was a kickoff rally May 1 at Union Square—historic site of many May Day gatherings—and then a march to Foley Square, in front of the notorious Federal Building, where many immigrants have experienced abuse, grief and discrimination at the hands of “la migra,” formerly known as the Immigration and Naturalization Service and now Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

At Foley Square, Charles Jenkins, May 1st Coalition co-coordinator and member of Local 100 Transport Workers Union, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the Million Worker March Movement, said, “All workers—in unions or not, with papers or not—need to unite. We want to organize all workers, so everyone can have good jobs and union pay.” His remarks were echoed by AFSCME District Council 37 leaders Misbah Uddin and Mike Gimbel, who said, “Immigrants’ rights are workers’ rights.”

Grassroots organizations of day laborers and street vendors came from Hempstead, Long Island; Queens; the Bronx; Manhattan; Staten Island; and Freehold, N.J. Their T-shirts and banners emphasized the spirit of the day: Esperanza del Barrio (Hope of the Barrio), Vamos Unidos—Vendedores Ambulantes Movilizando y Organizando en Solidaridad (Street Vendors Mobilizing and Organizing in Solidarity), Centro de Derechos Laborales (Center of Workers’ Rights), No Raids Committee, and NICE (New Immigrant



Community Empowerment). Several organizations from the Guatemalan community, including MIGUA (Guatemalan Immigrants’ Movement), were present.

Latina students from various New York City community colleges carried a banner saying, “We have a dream! Pass the DREAM Act now!” This act would allow all students, documented or not, to attend four-year colleges. Tens of thousands of immigrant students now have their dreams of education deferred because of discriminatory laws that hold them back.

The Filipino representation reflected the impressive organizing efforts of Bayan-USA and the Gabriela Network. Gabriela is a Philippine-U.S. women’s solidarity mass organization. Berna Ellorin, general secretary of Bayan-USA and co-coordinator of the May Day event, declared: “Migration is for survival. We wouldn’t leave our home countries if we could find work there, but neoliberalism—also known as imperialism—has destroyed the economies in our countries. That’s why we come here. Legalization for all, and down with imperialism!”

Carlos Canales, May 1st Coalition co-coordinator and community organizer of day laborers with the Workplace Project of Long Island, said, “We should do everything to end [Section] 287(g) [of the Immigration and Nationality Act], especially in Arizona where Sheriff Joe Arpaio has been using it to terrorize immigrants.” Section 287(g) authorizes local police to enforce immigration law.

The Al-Awda Palestine Right to Return Coalition representative, Dahlia Abisaab, stated: “Imagine being driven from your home and then forced to build a new home for your oppressor right on top of it. ... Palestinians understand and share the suffering of the Mexican people.”

Sara Rodriguez and Mike Filippo of the Stella D’Oro strikers in the Bronx told the crowd that the 160 strikers at the bakery “will keep fighting for as long as it takes!” The mostly women immigrants have been on the picket line for eight months, and not one of them has gone back to work, despite intense pressure.

Hector Castillo, a representative of the Dominican community, said: “People ask, ‘Why organize, if President Obama is giving immigration reform?’ This is a big error. We’ll only get legalization if we fight for it.”

Ray LaForest spoke for Haitian workers, and Walter Sinche for the Ecuadorian Alliance. African peoples were represented by Fallou Guyere of the Senegalese community and by Dr. Asha Samad-Matias of the SAFRAD-Somali Association, who made an eloquent appeal against U.S. military and economic aggression in the Horn of Africa. Jei Fong of Break the Chains represented Chinese workers in New York City. Shahid Comrade spoke for the Pakistan-USA Freedom Forum. He demanded an end to the U.S. drone-bomber attacks on his country and to U.S. occupation of Afghanistan. Chuck Mohan, president



WW PHOTOS: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD AND JOHN CATALINOTTO

Guyanese-American Workers United and a member of the May 1st Coalition, also spoke.

An Ecuadoran children’s dance troupe stole the show—and everyone’s hearts—with a beautiful dance presentation. One of the children spoke, appealing to President Obama not to deport his parents.

Both Nieves Ayress and Victor Toro represented La Peña del Bronx at the rally. Toro, who is currently facing deportation, summarized the key demands of the immigrant rights movement: legalization, stop the raids, reunify families and no conditions or discrimination.

Teresa Gutierrez, co-coordinator of the May 1st Coalition, said: “Several members of the press called the coalition days before the event to ask if the event was cancelled because of the swine flu crisis. Our response was that it was more dangerous to stay at home, not fighting for our rights, than to be at May Day. Our coalition is for keeping the struggle up, on May Day and every day.”

Larry Holmes, a leader of the Bail Out the People Movement, invited everyone to a People’s Economic Summit, which will be held May 31 in tents at Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, on the eve of the U.N. Summit on the World Economic Crisis.

Nicolás, representing the Indigenous people of Ecuador and the rest of the continent, spoke on behalf of non-immigrants. “Welcome to this country to all who come in peace and justice,” he said, “but not to Sheriff Arpaio and other racists.” □

Worldwide workers say

‘We won’t pay for capitalist crisis’

By Kathy Durkin

International Workers’ Day brought out millions this year. “We want jobs!” rang out from Jakarta to New Delhi to San Juan. Millions of workers worldwide focused on the spiraling economic crisis as they took to the streets on this historic day.

Here are some of the actions which took place.

Tens of thousands of Indonesian workers countrywide called for an end to lay-offs, temporary jobs, and anti-worker, anti-union laws. They demanded pay increases, including a higher minimum wage, and called for their government to implement measures to deal with the global downturn. The Congress of Indonesia Unions Alliance and the Working People’s Association were involved.

In the Philippines, thousands marched in Manila for jobs protection, higher pay and improved working conditions, while 16,000 marched to the National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea, with similar demands.

Japanese workers rallied on April 29



for pro-worker laws and government aid for the jobless at actions organized by the Japanese Trade Union Confederation.

Pakistani women joined a march in Lahore to demand “Equal pay for work of equal value!” while May Day activities also took place in Quetta, Peshawar, Multan and other cities in Pakistan.

India saw many marches, with labor unions out front, including in New Delhi, where workers protested job and wage cuts.

In Gaza City, Palestine, workers marched to demand jobs and called for Israel to end its blockade of Gaza and reopen the border crossings. The blockade has caused thousands of Palestinians to lose their jobs. Since last year, few Palestinians have been permitted to work in Israel. Israeli bombing of factories there during its 22-day military offensive in January caused the loss of many jobs as well as workers’ lives.

Palestinians also marched in Jerusalem to protest Israeli destruction of their homes, the ongoing illegal settlements in the Occupied West Bank, and the crisis of unemployment and impoverishment of their people.

South African workers commemorated May Day with 36 demonstrations nationwide. Workers there are engaged in strikes in the transport, metal, trucking and other industries. The Congress of South African Trade Unions has put forward a series of demands to the newly-elected African National Congress government headed by Jacob Zuma.

Unions in Nigeria organized rallies to

protest privatization of oil refineries, cuts in subsidies on petroleum products, and for an increase in the minimum wage. A rally in Abuja brought out 20,000 workers.

Workers marched in many European countries.

Eight French unions organized 283 rallies of 1.2 million people in Paris, Bordeaux, Grenoble and elsewhere throughout the country. It was the first time since World War II that all the trade union confederations marched together. Union members in Marseille held banners which read: “They are the crisis! We are the solution!” This was the third national protest over the French government’s pro-bank, pro-corporate policies, and the lack of protections for workers who are being hard-hit by the economic crisis.

Rallies were held all over Greece. Strikers disrupted public transportation, ferry service and air flights in Athens, where thousands also marched. General Confederation of Greek Workers’ banners read, “We won’t pay for their crises!”

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WW PHOTOS: LIZ GREEN, MIKE MARTINEZ, BOB MCCUBBIN, BERTA JOUBERT-CECI, ALAN POLLOCK

Amid economic crisis

Workers in U.S. march on May Day

By David Hoskins

Workers across the United States turned out in mass numbers in cities large and small on International Workers' Day to march and rally for workers' and immigrants' rights. Inclement weather in many cities and fear of swine flu was not enough to keep workers off the streets. This year's May Day occurred in the midst of a deepening global economic crisis that has fueled widespread anger against the banks and government bailouts.

In **Miami**, labor and community organizations from across the state marched down Biscayne Boulevard. Key participants included the Florida Immigrant Coalition, the local AFL-CIO and a newly formed union of Miami taxicab drivers.

Marchers called for a living wage, amnesty for all undocumented workers, and an end to the bank bailouts. Hundreds marched through downtown Miami and drew parallels between the current economic crisis and the Great Depression as they called for relief programs for poor and working people.

Mike Martinez, a key organizer with the Miami May Day Alliance, said, "The fact that there was a march on May Day in Miami is a big victory in itself. That there were hundreds of people, including labor, immigrant rights and anti-war groups joining forces speaks volumes to the political changes taking place in Miami."

In **Boston**, "Legalization yes, deportation no!" rang out through the streets of the East Boston, Chelsea and Everett communities as 2,000 immigrants and other workers marched and rallied. The May 1st Coalition of Chelsea, East Boston and Everett; Chelsea Collaborative; the East Boston Ecumenical Community Council; and La Comunidad, Inc. sponsored the march.

The Boston School Bus Drivers USW Local 8751, the Boston May Day Coalition and dozens of other organizations endorsed the action. The Boston Bail Out the People Movement had a strong contingent, including the Women's Fightback Network, New England Human Rights for Haiti, the bus drivers and the youth group Fight Imperialism, Stand Together.

A student rally at Harvard supported legislation that would provide conditional permanent resident status to undocumented students. Hundreds of flyers were distributed for a May 14 community summit at Roxbury Community College to defend equal quality education, which is currently under attack in Boston.

In **Los Angeles**, more than 13,000 people came out on May Day to share the message of justice for immigrants. The Multi-ethnic Immigrant Worker Organizing Network and the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor marched from Echo Park to downtown Los Angeles. The Full Rights for Immigrants Coalition, the Southern California Immigration Coalition and the March 25th Coalition also held marches.

Marchers brought demands for full immigrant rights, passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, and an end to raids, deportations and abusive guest worker programs. The various May Day organizers openly challenged the corporate media's portrayal of them as divided. The March 25th Coalition and the Southern California Immigration Coalition participated in a unity press conference.

More than 1,500 marched in **San Francisco** under the slogan "Workers Without Borders, United in Struggle," despite steady rain and media-generated fears of the swine flu. The May Day coalition of immigrant, labor, and community activists rallied in Dolores Park in the working-class Latino/a Mission District before marching down Market Street to the Civic Center Plaza and ending with a rally at City Hall.

Marchers included political and community organizations like the San Francisco Day Laborers, the National Alliance for Filipino Concerns, the Gray Panthers and Transgenders March for Immigrant Rights. The LGBT immigrant rights organization Out 4 Immigration carried banners that read "Stop Deporting Our Partners!" The International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 carried a stunning banner calling for workers' solidarity to stop repressive government attacks on immigrant workers.

In **San Diego**, an afternoon rally at City College drew over 500 pro-immigrant supporters, including community groups, youth and students representing area MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán] chapters and the Filipino groups AnakBayan and GABRIELA. A high point of the rally was the appearance onstage of a contingent of day laborers from Jornaleros of San Diego County with their banners. A militant march to Chicano Park, a historically important parcel of land seized by the community decades ago, followed. Members and friends of the San Diego International Action Center

carried a banner which read, "¡La Batalla de los Obreros No Tiene Fronteras! No Borders in the Workers' Struggle!" A concluding rally organized by the Raza Rights Coalition was held in the park. An evening May Day event organized by the San Diego Mumia Coalition at the World Beat Center featured a new film on Mumia Abu-Jamal, bands and poetry.

At least 1,000 marched in **San Jose**. Hundreds marched in **Oakland, Richmond, Berkeley, Hayward, Santa Rosa, Napa, and Martinez**.

In **Tucson**, Ariz., nearly 2,000 people rallied and marched. Immigrant rights activist Isabel Garcia opened the rally with a brief history of May Day, which she called a day for solidarity between workers, Indigenous people, youth and immigrants. She gave special recognition to immigrant workers for bringing May Day back in the U.S.

Student leaders from Movimiento spoke of their struggle against capitalism, racism, sexism, anti-LGBT bigotry and other injustices. The young speakers raised mil-

itant demands for removal of the border wall and for full funding for education and jobs programs.

Other speakers included workers from the local Food City grocery store chain who are fighting for union recognition. Steelworkers and other union representatives called on Congress to pass the Employee Free Choice Act. Tucson Unified School District teachers and University of Arizona professors spoke about budget cuts that are eliminating jobs and degrading the quality of education.

The Indigenous dance group, Danza Mexica Cuauhtémoc, led the crowd on a spirited, chant-filled post-rally march through the streets of Tucson.

Detroit protestors called for full legalization of all undocumented workers, an end to ICE raids, deportations and racial profiling by law enforcement, and equal pay and protection for documented and undocumented immigrant workers.

As many as 15,000 turned out for the May Day event organized by Latinos

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Bail Out the People!

Three events to plan resistance

By Kris Hamel

Activists fighting the capitalist economic crisis have three important events this summer in which to participate.

A People's Economic Summit on May 31 in New York City will take place in conjunction with the United Nations Summit on the World Economic Crisis. Organizers will set up tents in Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, outside of the U.N., where they will share information and insight on how the economic crisis affects poor and working people in the U.S. and worldwide. They will formulate a vision of a future free of social and economic inequality and injustice.

A People's Summit and tent city will occur June 14-17 at Grand Circus Park in Detroit as the National Business Summit meets in that devastated city, which organizers call the "ground zero" of the economic crisis. The People's Summit will counter this meeting of corporate giants

with four days of active resistance and fightback. Demonstrations, rallies, stopping evictions, cultural events and speak-outs are being planned. A "people's stimulus plan" and "people's economic bill of rights" will be circulated and voted on at the tent city.

On Sept. 19 and 20, protests against the G20 Summit in New York City will offer activists the challenge of uniting and working together to organize the widest protests possible against the governments and bankers of the big capitalist countries. The last G20 Summit, held in London in April, was met with massive protests there and throughout Europe. The New York G20 meeting will be about "fixing" the system that puts profits before people. It must be met with strong resistance!

For information on these protests, see BailOutPeople.org or call 212-633-6646; contact the Detroit People's Summit at 313-887-4344. □



Protesters assail changes at WBAI radio

By John Catalinotto
New York

Some 100 WBAI radio supporters and listeners, many of them activists in anti-racism, workers' and pro-liberation movement organizations in the New York area, gathered April 29 on just two days' notice outside the station's Wall Street offices. They were there to protest recent proposed changes in the station's management and support WBAI general manager Tony Riddle and program director Bernard White, both Black men threatened with firing.

Pacifica Radio's WBAI, located in the center of the FM dial in the New York region, potentially reaches 20 million listeners. That makes it valuable and attractive to those who want to turn it into a profit-making enterprise or sell it,

as nearly happened during the Dec. 25, 2000, "Christmas Coup."

It is also the only broadcast medium in the region that gives voice to the Black Liberation and other revolutionary movements, as well as a broad and diverse array who counter the dominant ruling-class culture. Activist Pam Africa, Suzanne Ross of New York's local committee supporting Mumia Abu-Jamal and revolutionary lawyer Lynne Stewart all expressed their support for Riddle, White and WBAI.

International Action Center co-director Sara Flounders and the December 12 Movement's Omowale Clay, both WBAI local board members, were there. WBAI producers whose voices all listeners would recognize, like labor reporter Mimi Rosenberg, Francis Scott Keys, Bob Lederer and Don Debar, and Daniel Vila, who produces one of WBAI's Spanish-

language shows, spoke at the protest. Nia Bediaquo was the one Pacifica board member present.

Pacifica's interim executive director Grace Aaron had issued an order to lock out WBAI personnel from the station's transmitter and install remote-control broadcasting equipment, threatening the control of the local board. Aaron also approved the maneuver by the current majority of the local WBAI board to fire Riddle and White at an "executive session" without an official and thorough hearing. The board majority blamed the two for mismanagement based on WBAI's financial problems.

Supporters of Riddle and White point out that the capitalist crisis has hurt all nonprofit organizations and many giant capitalist monopolies as well. To blame WBAI's financial difficulty on the two



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

WBAI's Program Director Bernard White defends his station

Black managers without a thorough investigation is a reactionary attack on equality and solidarity. While WBAI should be stabilized financially, they say it must also maintain and deepen its roots in the many communities of New York that suffer oppression in this capitalist society.

To help defend WBAI, see www.justice-unity.org. □

Roll back the rents—vouchers for all

By Gavrielle Gemma

In its 2009 "State of the Homeless" report, released April 23, the Coalition for the Homeless reported that 36,000 people use New York City shelters every night. This includes a record 9,600 families with 15,500 children, representing a 12 percent increase in homeless families in nine months. (coalitionforthehomeless.org) Thousands more homeless do not use the crowded, unsafe shelters or are crammed into temporary space with relatives.

The current economic depression will send the numbers of homeless soaring.

These numbers are due to the systematic, deliberate capitalist displacement of tenants in New York's working-class neighborhoods, especially people of color communities. It's called gentrification—workers out, parasites with luxury apartments in.

Real estate developers and banks—backed by city, state and federal government policies—have stripped New York City of affordable housing. Between 2005 and 2008, 80,000 apartments under the monthly rent of \$1,000, and 55,000 under \$800, "disappeared." (coalitionforthehomeless.org)

Bloomberg denies subsidies to homeless families

Section 8 is a federal subsidy of housing costs above 30 percent of income (if you can

find a place to live at the rent cap set by the program). There are only 300,000 vouchers available, meaning you can only get a voucher if someone leaves the program. There are one million families throughout the country and 130,600 in New York City on the waiting list. An additional 231,000 are on the waiting list for New York City public housing. (nyc.gov)

Previous New York City policy was to move families with children in shelters to the top of these lists. Mayor Bloomberg banned this in 2007 and implemented the "Work Advantage" program, which carries a two-year assistance limit. The first 1,400 families in Bloomberg's program will soon be cut from assistance, to likely wind up in shelters.

Mayor Bloomberg is the eighth richest person in the U.S. His company, Bloomberg LLP, advises bankers and developers on how to maximize real estate profits and obtain low-cost, tax-free loans. He appointed Marvin Markus to head the so-called Rent Stabilization Board, which rubberstamps whopping rent increases each year. Markus is vice-president of Goldman Sachs, an investment company hugely involved in real estate.

It is estimated that the profit return on real estate is about 30 percent in New York City—an amount that makes capitalists drool.

It costs \$36,000 a year to house a fam-

ily in a shelter (coalitionforthehomeless.org) and \$149,650 a year to incarcerate a youth—many of whom wind up in jail due to homelessness. (NYC Association of Homeless and Street-Involved Youth's "State of the City's Homeless Youth Report" 2009) Why not spend it on real housing and jobs? The city wants to keep rents high for the profit of their buddies and themselves.

The municipal New York City Economic Development Corporation and similar agencies direct hundreds of millions of dollars to promote gentrification. The city and state gave Forest City Ratner Companies a \$670 million, low-interest loan in tax-free bonds, and \$200 million in outright subsidies, to gentrify parts of Brooklyn. (Gotham Gazette, April 28)

"Converting Chinatown," a meticulously documented report by CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities and the Community Development Project of the Urban Justice Center, describes the process. First the city pays for studies that declare an area ripe for picking, such as the East River Waterfront. Then the city rezones the area and arranges for loans and subsidies.

Then harassment of tenants begins. Seventy-five percent of Chinatown tenants surveyed reported harassment by landlords, from disrepair of buildings to refusing rents or new leases, illegal court action and outright assaults. Small busi-

nesses are also being forced out.

The New York City Planning Board has approved 25 new hotels, 118 luxury boutiques and cafes and 26 luxury residential buildings for Chinatown. (urbanjustice.org) When the new, unaffordable projects are built, they receive tax abatements, meaning developers don't have to pay taxes on profit. "Converting Chinatown" states that 25 percent of all real estate taxes in New York City are currently in abatement.

Housing is a right

Every human being has the right to a decent place to live. That's why we fight for socialism, where the working class in power will ensure housing to all. But while capitalism still exists we must fight.

Federal Housing Section 8 should be available to all who need it. In New York City we need an emergency rollback in rents to levels people can afford. From 1942 to 1974, numerous federal and state acts were passed on an emergency basis. These were all a result of enormous struggles by the workers and communities.

A steady chipping away at these controls; the complete merging of the banks and real estate with government; and high unemployment, the destruction of welfare and declining wages are evicting thousands of people from their right—a home. We have the power to fight back. □

Defendants sentenced

Meeting exposes Fort Dix 5 frame-up

By Joe Piette

The Fort Dix 5 defendants—Mohamed Shnewer, Serdar Tatar, and Eljvir, Dritan and Shain Duka—were unjustly sentenced to staggering prison terms for allegedly conspiring to kill soldiers at the Fort Dix, N.J., military base in 2007. These young, working-class Muslim immigrants were convicted on Dec. 23.

Shnewer, Dritan and Shain Duka received life imprisonment plus 30 years. Eljvir Duka was sentenced to a life term. Tatar was sentenced to 33 years in jail plus lifetime probation. All of them insist that agent provocateurs, unethical informants and an unfair trial led to their convictions.

When the sentencing hearings began on April 28, District Court Judge Robert B. Kugler explained federal guidelines. After Sept. 11, 2001, new "enhanced terrorism" guidelines increased potential

prison sentences.

For instance, Dritan Duka was given 51 points, the most points the judge had ever seen; 18 points came from enhanced sentencing. Defense lawyers objected to the use of enhanced sentencing, arguing it was not justified since there were no victims. After the hearings, they explained that the prison terms would have been shorter without enhanced sentencing.

Defendants were brought to separate sentencing hearings in handcuffs and waist and ankle chains. As they were led to their seats, they smiled at their family members in the courtroom. U.S. marshals stood near the spectators' seats. Police cars ringed the building. There was airport-like security on the first floor and outside the courtroom on the fourth floor.

After family and friends gave character testimony, each prisoner addressed the court.

Dritan Duka said there was no plot by the defendants, but "there was a conspiracy against us, created, produced, and directed by the U.S. government."

Before sentencing Shain Duka, the judge argued prejudicially that the defendants were taped only when the informants were present. He asserted that the lack of evidence on tape "does not concern me."

Shain Duka yelled, "I am innocent! I am innocent! I am innocent! I did not conspire!" and "This was a snare by the government, full of foul play and corruption. ..." He called for "an independent, honest and thorough investigation," which he guaranteed "would end up like the dropped conviction of Alaska Senator Stevens."

Family members will continue to fight for their imprisoned loved ones, and defense attorneys have filed notices to appeal the court decisions.

Support meeting April 23

The defendants' family members and a representative of Project Support and Legal Advocacy for Muslims (Project SALAM) spoke at a meeting in support of the Fort Dix 5 in Philadelphia on April 23.

The evening's speakers revealed how they were framed, that Homeland Security continues to harass their families, and that more than 400 other Muslim immigrants have experienced the same systematic injustices.

Zurata Duka, the mother of three of the defendants, their 17-year-old brother, Burim Duka, and Leila Duka, Dritan Duka's 11-year-old daughter, addressed the meeting. Mohamed Schnewer's sister, Inas Schnewer, and his mother, Faten Schnewer, also spoke.

Preemptive prosecution was central to the FBI's case. The men never met at any

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After assassination plot is foiled in Bolivia

Evo Morales presents Mother Earth proposal at U.N.

By Donna Lazarus

Within a week after security forces foiled an assassination plot against President Evo Morales inside Bolivia, the United Nations General Assembly approved on April 22 the president's initiative to create International Mother Earth Day to protect the rights of Mother Earth and of all living beings.

Bolivian security forces on April 16 busted the assassination plot in the eastern city of Santa Cruz, a stronghold of the Bolivian oligarchy, Morales's opposition. Forces loyal to the president killed three apparent foreign mercenaries in a hotel shootout, arresting two more. In La Paz, Bolivian Vice President Álvaro García Linera told reporters that the men were carrying guns and grenades and attacked police as they approached them. (boliviarising.blogspot.com)

Many Bolivians suspect the plotters to be linked to the eastern oligarchy, agribusiness and/or their imperialist backers in the United States. Last August a mass mobilization of the Bolivian poor set back eastern agribusiness's attempts to starve the cities.

The Pachamama

At the U.N., Morales based the Mother Earth proposal on four principles included in the declaration he presented:

The first is "The right to life, which signifies the right to exist. The right of which not one ecosystem, neither one species of animal nor vegetable, not one snow-capped mountain, neither river nor lake would be exterminated or eliminated by an irresponsible attitude of human beings."

Should Bolivia's (and Peru's) high Andean glaciers melt due to global warming, establishing the right of snow-capped mountains to exist will enable Bolivia to continue preserving its national water supplies and protect its living society.

The second principle is that "Mother Earth has to be able to regenerate her biocapacity."

The third principle declares "the right to a clean life, which means the right of Mother Earth to live without pollution."

The fourth principle is "the right to harmony and balance with all and among all. This is the right to be recognized as a part of a system in which all are interdependent." (For the complete speech, see www.boliviaun.org.)

Morales' presentation of Bolivia's initiative has significance for any country where capitalist and U.S. imperialist interests have stolen resources, stripped the land bare and left toxic waste behind.

In Bolivia the concept of Mother Earth resonates as the traditional Indigenous life-giving force, the Pachamama, a dual entity who combines space and time to provide harmony for the community. Everyone in an Indigenous, Afro-Bolivian or mestizo (mixed) community acknowledges her in all celebrations and gives a little libation to her for what the earth has given to humanity.

The words "growth" and "development" do not appear in the new Bolivian Constitution because individual and corporate gain are seen as anathema for a society which seeks to meet its needs based on cooperation, collective distribution and reciprocity.

Victorious hunger strike

On April 9 Morales began a hunger strike to demand that Congress pass legislation allowing general elections in December. Some 1,500 to 3,000 Movement for Socialism (MAS) supporters, activists, workers and union leaders joined Morales, and thousands more demonstrated outside the presidential palace. Bolivians in Spain and Argentina also participated. Before becoming president, Morales had participated in 17 hun-



Bolivian President Evo Morales.

ger strikes as a leader of the "cocaleros," Bolivia's coca growers.

The hunger strike was victorious on April 14. The resulting legislation will give Indigenous communities broader representation in parliament and allow Bolivian citizens living abroad to vote in the December elections. The new legislation also enables the president to run for office again in December.

Celebrating the victory, Morales said, "The people should not forget that you need to fight to change. We alone can't guarantee this revolutionary process, but with people power it's possible." (boliviarising.blogspot.com)

On April 17, at the Summit of the Americas conference, organized by the Organization of American States and held in Trinidad, Morales said he could not understand how debates over humanity and the environment could take place without Cuba's presence. He denounced capitalism, blamed it for the global financial crisis, and declared himself a Marxist-Leninist and communist. He then asked, "Are they going to expel me now? I want them to expel me from the OAS. It's unbelievable that you can be expelled from the OAS for being Marxist-Leninist." (www.houston.indymedia.org)

Morales defends the coca leaf

Some 2,000 supporters of Morales and his MAS government were disappointed when poor health forced him to cancel his

April 22 speaking engagement at Salem United Methodist Church in Harlem. Morales's hunger strike and heavy schedule had left him exhausted, a diplomatic note explained.

Morales' op-ed in the March 14 New York Times defended coca as a traditional Bolivian plant used to combat hunger and high altitude sickness. Bolivia would like the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs to reverse its 1961 stance putting the coca leaf in the same category as cocaine. Bolivia manufactures many products for export that use coca, such as tea and toothpaste.

Morales, a former coca farmer, and the coca growers' association are waging a campaign to invalidate the International Narcotics Control Board's 2006 annual report. Their slogan is "Coca sí, cocaine no."

According to Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, professor emeritus of sociology at the University of La Paz, who spoke in New York on April 24, Bolivian society is focusing now on its sovereignty, emphasizing "our resources," "our land," "our memory." Bolivian society is reviving the traditional precept of "the common good." (www.stophedrugwar.org)

Cusicanqui, who is also the founder of the Bolivian group Coca and Sovereignty and an adviser to Morales, said, "With its opposition to the coca leaf, the INCB merely foment drug traffic."

Cusicanqui described the massive participation of virtually all sectors of society in constructing a community that benefits everyone. She reported that traditional institutions such as Carnival, fairs and other public celebrations have become transformed so that various groups such as women and LGBT people intervene to express political platforms and manifestos. Students have organized recycling projects, and city dwellers have begun planting urban orchards to protect the environment and feed people. □

Defend Milanovic

NATO murdered journalists in 1999, blamed Yugoslavs

By Heather Cottin

An international movement is protesting the already seven-year-long imprisonment of Dragoljub Milanovic, the former director of Yugoslav television station RTS. Milanovic was a target of NATO's effort to blame the victim following its U.S.-led bombing campaign against Yugoslav civilians 10 years ago.

During March and April 1999, RTS's dedicated workers willingly risked danger to transmit words and images to the world about the U.S./NATO bombardment that was targeting the Serbian infrastructure and slaughtering Yugoslav civilians. Early NATO statements focused on the need to "degrade" the Yugoslav government's "ability to transmit their version of the news." (NATO press briefing, April 23, 2000)

NATO bombs and rockets destroyed 10 private radio and television stations and 50 TV transmitters and relay stations during the 78 days of air war. On April 23, 1999, a single NATO rocket—a U.S. rocket—hit RTS headquarters in Belgrade, killing 16 and severely wounding another 19 of the 120 workers in the building.

To cover its own role in this murder,

NATO used the court that U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright had pushed to establish in 1993. The U.S. and its NATO allies funded this court, called the International Criminal Tribunal on Yugoslavia and based in The Hague, Netherlands, to blame the fighting on the peoples of the Balkans, especially the government in Belgrade.

The ICTY's role starting in 1999 was to cover up NATO's aggression by blaming Yugoslav leaders. Before the bombing ended, the ICTY had charged Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic with war crimes. In 2001, ICTY Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte claimed that Milosevic and Milanovic had been "warned" about the bombings of the TV headquarters, and were thus responsible for the deaths because they didn't order an evacuation.

Though there were many threats that NATO would attempt such a violation of the Geneva Convention, the RTS reporters and staff voluntarily stayed at their posts.

By 2001, a NATO-organized coup had overthrown the Milosevic government and put NATO puppets in power in Belgrade. A Belgrade court then tried and

found Milanovic guilty of the deaths of the RTS workers.

Free Milanovic

Activists from Europe and North America, including representatives of the U.S.-based International Action Center, met March 25 in Pozarevac, Serbia, where Milanovic is imprisoned, to organize a campaign to free him.

Renowned Serbian Journalist Liljana Milanovic spoke at the meeting, noting that RTS was "deliberately bombed" according to the NATO commander in Europe at the time, Gen. Wesley Clark.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair had admitted that NATO bombed the station after it showed the carnage from a passenger train bombing on the bridge in the Grdelička Gauge where 75 civilians were killed.

Thus NATO's primary goal in attacking the broadcasting facility was not to disable the Serbian military command and control system, as NATO statements later claimed, but an attempt to stifle the truth. This makes the assault a war crime, as even Amnesty International charged in 2000 and repeated in April.

On April 23 NATO again rejected the AI charge, claiming that the ICTY—itsself a NATO creation—had absolved NATO of war crimes in the past.

The court's decision was thus no surprise. The ICTY exonerated NATO of responsibility for the crimes against humanity committed by the U.S.-led alliance in Yugoslavia, including deliberately bombarding vital civilian infrastructure; conspiring to initiate a war of aggression; lethally targeting journalists; using depleted uranium and anti-personnel weapons such as cluster bombs in areas of high civilian concentration; and bombing with the intent and effect of causing environmental catastrophe.

No to NATO

Today there are 28 NATO members, including many former socialist countries in the east that are now semi-colonies of the U.S. and Western Europe. NATO, still under Washington's leadership, backs up the investors and predators that exploit the human, mineral and strategic resources of the world. NATO has encircled Russia, sent its navies to the Arctic and to South

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Hands off Pakistan!

More and more, U.S. imperialism is making Pakistan a battleground in its ugly war to achieve unchallenged control of western Asia. And more and more, the Pentagon’s cold, high-tech ratcheting up of death and destruction is driving the Pakistani people into open resistance.

Mountain villages that once rarely saw a car are now the targets of pilotless drones—the latest deadly gimmick in a remote-controlled war where the actual pilots sit in Arizona or Nevada. These automatons of the U.S. Air Force, trained on computer games to have absolutely no conscience or sense of humanity, push buttons that tell the Predator and Reaper drones to rain down real bombs and Hellfire missiles on their targets, incinerating whole families. How can they then go home at the end of the day and react with normal human feelings? Ah, but the U.S. military has hired whole schools of people with degrees in psychology to help them shake off any feelings of guilt or shame.

This is the total moral bankruptcy that a permanent warfare state produces. It is the mindset cultivated by a ruling class that values the world’s people only as labor to be exploited in pursuit of profit—all in the name of “progress” and “development.” Those who stand in the way, even if they are only defending the land and homes that sheltered their folk back into the mists of time, are expendable.

But to hear the generals and the politicians in Washington tell it, the U.S. is very worried about the “stability” of Pakistan. Joint Chiefs of Staff head Adm. Mike Mullen says he is “gravely concerned” about Taliban advances in Pakistan and Afghanistan. National security adviser Gen. James L. Jones described the situation in Pakistan as “one of the very most serious problems we face.” Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton even called Pakistan a “mortal threat” to the U.S. because it possesses nuclear weapons.

These highly publicized statements are meant to soften up the population

here for even more U.S. intervention in Pakistan. They also provide Congress with an excuse to pass another whopping “supplemental” bill, now circulating in Congress and reported to have risen to \$94 billion.

This amount is just to pay for the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and now Pakistan. Since 9/11, the total spent on these supplemental appropriations—which are above and beyond the regular Pentagon budget—will add up to almost \$1 trillion. In addition, the Pentagon routinely gets more than half a trillion dollars every year, supposedly to keep us all “safer,” even as tens of millions lose their homes and jobs because of the capitalist economic crisis.

According to an article in Congress Daily, the current supplemental bill includes “\$400 million to train and equip the Pakistan military, a central piece of the new strategy for Pakistan and Afghanistan announced by President Obama last month.”

Pakistan has suffered for decades under a series of military dictatorships supported by Washington and the Pentagon. The result has been great wealth for a few well-connected families and abysmal poverty for the vast majority. A rebellion against the last military dictator, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, ushered in a civilian government but one that is weak, corrupt and afraid to go against U.S. dictates. This has only fueled the Islamic opposition, which is strongest in the border areas with Afghanistan where the Pentagon has been openly violating Pakistan’s sovereignty for some time, bombings its villages with pilotless drones and staging attacks by Special Forces troops.

Thousands of people began fleeing the region when the Pakistani army, under strong pressure from Washington, began an offensive just one day before President Asif Ali Zardari was scheduled to meet President Barack Obama in Washington. Some half a million have been made refugees since the fighting began.

The U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan created this terrible situation in Pakistan. The people in the U.S. showed in 2006 and 2008 that they don’t want any of these wars. But elections don’t end imperialist wars. Only the independent, militant struggle of the people can bring the troops home and stop the killing. □

Defend Milanovic

Continued from page 9

America, is in the Horn of Africa and has occupied Afghanistan.

Milanovic’s continued imprisonment would allow the U.S. and other NATO governments to commit crimes against humanity, bomb and kill with immunity, and jail those who tell the truth. The current Serbian government is obediently re-trying Milanovic, adding years to his sentence in the service of its NATO paymasters.

Taking up the cause of Dragoljub Milanovic is not only to free an innocent person, it is to vindicate truth. At the meeting in Pozarevac, Vladimir Krsljanin, a political leader in Serbia, said, “This case is about freedom, truth and resistance to NATO.”

The writer represented the International Action Center in Yugoslavia at the Pozarevac meeting. For more information on the 1999 war and the ICTY, see “Hidden Agenda: the U.S./NATO Takeover of Yugoslavia,” at leftbooks.com.

Worldwide workers

‘We won’t pay for capitalist crisis’

Continued from page 6

A march for jobs brought out 65,000 people in Madrid, Spain, in response to a 17 percent unemployment rate that is greatly affecting youth, immigrants and the elderly.

Throughout Latin America, marches, rallies and meetings took place. Whether in Panama, Honduras or Uruguay, workers demanded higher wages, better working conditions, unionization rights and cuts in prices of necessities.

In Puerto Rico, tens of thousands of workers, including members of at least 22 labor unions from the public and private sectors, marched in San Juan. A strike was called to protest the government’s firing of 30,000 workers and proposed anti-union legislation. Teachers, workers

U.S. imperialism backs slaughter in Sri Lanka

By Sara Flounders

The government of Sri Lanka, with U.S. arms and military aid from Israel and Pakistan, is waging a brutal war against the Tamil people of Sri Lanka.

The Tamil population there is a nationally oppressed minority. They have waged a long, strong struggle for self-determination in Sri Lanka, a large island country of 20 million people located southeast of India.

The Sri Lankan government’s present campaign is justified as an effort to destroy, with a so-called “final offensive,” the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Yet the Sri Lankan army has opened a new attack against the entire civilian population.

The government has moved tens of thousands of Tamil into strategic hamlets and concentration camps. Hundreds of thousands of Tamil civilians have been displaced. Recent military operations include mass arrests of civilians fleeing battle areas, torture and targeted assassinations. Many prohibited weapons designed to create terror among civilians, including napalm, white phosphorus and cluster bombs, are provided to the Sri Lankan military by U.S. military aid.

The Boston Globe reports: “The United Nations estimates that some 6,500 civilians have died and 14,000 have been injured in the government’s merciless offensive against the Tamil Tigers in the northeast of the country. ... 100,000 refugees need medical care, food, and shelter, and another 50,000 are under shelling in a five-square-mile war zone.” (April 25)

Sri Lanka’s military declared on May 1 that their troops had cornered Tamil Tiger rebels, who have been fighting for an independent homeland since 1983, in a five-kilometer-long strip of territory in the northeast and were poised for their final assault. The LTTE has said that they will return to guerilla warfare tactics if they are forced out of the area they have held in the north of Sri Lanka.

On May 2 the Sri Lankan Army fired artillery shells on the only remaining makeshift hospital at Mu’li-vaaykkaal, in a government-declared ‘safety zone’ in the Mullaitivu district of the northern war zone. The attack killed at least 64 patients and attendees, including a volunteer doctor, and wounded 87. The online news service TamilNet, the Associated Press

and Reuters all reported on this civilian massacre.

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is also commander-in-chief of the country’s armed forces, and Defense Minister Gotabahaya Rajapaksa, his brother, have banned international aid groups, human rights monitors and independent journalists from the entire region. Defense Minister Rajapaksa has dual U.S. and Sri Lankan citizenship. He has often compared the Sri Lankan war against the LTTE to the U.S. “war on terror” against Islamic militants.

Imperialist policies of divide & rule

The problems of Sri Lanka today are rooted in the racist divide-and-rule policies established under British colonial rule of the island, then known as Ceylon. Along with the indigenous Tamil population, the British brought in more than a million Tamils as indentured slaves to work the tea plantations on the island in the late 18th and 19th century. Singhalese chauvinism was encouraged.

When British imperialism was defeated in the whole South Asian subcontinent in 1948, the British handed the government in Sri Lanka to the dominant Sinhalese nationality. The Sinhalese continued the policy of imposing their language as the only official language and limiting access to health care, schools, universities, civil service and all forms of political participation for the impoverished Tamil community.

Repeated attempts by moderate Tamils to effect change were met by fierce government repression. Communal violence by chauvinist Sinhalese, backed by the Sri Lankan government, killed thousands of Tamils in racist pogroms in 1956, 1958, 1977 and 1983. Tamil homes and small businesses were burnt in many villages. These systematic and government-sanctioned attacks led Tamil youths to take up armed struggle as the only means to defend their people.

Just as the U.S. government demonizes national liberation movements in Palestine, Lebanon, the Philippines, Nepal and Colombia as terrorist, the LTTE is on the U.S. list of “terrorist” organizations. But the real terror is the tactics used against nationally oppressed people to suppress justified resistance.

The Tamil diaspora in the U.S., Canada and Europe has condemned the atrocities by the Sri Lankan army against civilians and organized many demonstrations and protests calling for an immediate halt to the brutal offensive being waged by the Sri Lankan army against the Tamil people.

A statement by professor Jose Maria Sison, chairperson of the International League of Peoples’ Struggle, “condemns the criminal use of chemical weapons, nerve gas, cluster bombs and other types of bombs and artillery fire by the Sri Lankan army against the Tamil people. Under the auspices of the U.S., the Sri Lankan regime gets open political support from India and its military acquires its war materiel from Pakistan, a notorious military proxy of the U.S. in the region. The blatant use of banned weapons constitutes a war crime under the Geneva conventions.”

As with many other struggles for self determination and sovereignty, this struggle of the oppressed Tamil nationality deserves international support. It is essential that progressive organizations raise their voices in solidarity with the Tamil struggle and against the brutal U.S.-financed repression in Sri Lanka today. □

EDITORIAL

Influenza Porcina capitalista

Cada desastre, ya sea terremoto, inundación o epidemia, muestra las fallas en la sociedad.

Tal es el caso de la posible pandemia, o epidemia mundial, de una influenza virulenta causada por un virus recién mutado. Esta versión humana de la influenza porcina ha golpeado a México más severamente, y a los EEUU en segundo lugar. Se ha extendido rápidamente a una decena de países.

Políticamente, la amenaza más grande es que los demagogos derechistas intentarán culpar a l@s mexican@s, especialmente a l@s inmigrantes mexican@, de la propagación de la epidemia. Este es un serio desafío político a las fuerzas progresistas de los EEUU. Va a demandar un nuevo esfuerzo de forjar solidaridad entre l@s trabajadores/as inmigrantes y l@s nacid@s en los EEUU, una solidaridad que será enfatizada en los eventos del Primero de Mayo a través del país.

El intento de culpar a l@s mexican@s no sólo es odioso, sino que no tiene ningún sentido. Examinemos los hechos.

El 28 de abril la ABC News reportó que “la primera sospecha de un caso de influenza porcina en México fue descubierta en el remoto pueblo agropecuario de La Gloria” el mes pasado. Cerca de 800 personas, de las 2000 que habitan en el lugar, se enfermaron. “La forma más probable de que este niño se contagiara fue a través de otra persona que había tenido contacto con los cerdos”, dijo Dr. Kathryn Edwards del Centro Médico Vanderbilt.

Lo que la ABC no reportó fue que los cerdos estaban en una granja industrial cercana administrada por una subsidiaria de la Smithfield Farms, un monopolio agrícola basado en Virginia y Carolina del Norte, notorio por la contaminación y sus prácticas anti-sindicales. Por muchos años las comunidades alrededor de estas plantas se han quejado de las condiciones insalubres y el hedor producido por miles de cerdos y sus excrementos.

El historiador Mike Davis, profesor de la Universidad de California en Irvine y autor de “El monstruo en nuestra puerta: la amenaza global de la influenza aviaria”, escribió en el periódico Guardian, basado en Gran Bretaña, el 27 de abril que el “lodazal fecal de una pocilga industrial” era el medio más probable para que un nuevo virus de influenza pudiera desarrollarse. Smithfield, escribió Davis, resistirá ferozmente cualquier intento de cambio de su peligroso pero extremadamente lucrativo proceso de producción.

Siendo escritor con mucha experiencia en estas cuestiones, Davis también mencionó tres obstáculos para la defensa eficaz contra cualquier pandemia: la deficiencia del sistema estadounidense de salud pública, la actitud negativa de los Estados Unidos y otros países ricos para promover facilidades modernas de salud pública en los países pobres, y la patente de la medicina de influenza Tamiflu, registrada por la compañía Farmacéutica Roche basada en Suiza, que impide a los países pobres desarrollar medicinas genéricas anti-virales.

La primera lección de esto es que Estados Unidos tiene un vergonzoso récord en cuanto al cuidado de la salud. Los billones de dólares gastados en la guerra debían ser usados para establecer un sistema de salud nacional de calidad y eliminar la industria privada del cuidado de salud basada en precios excesivos y ganancias.

En segundo lugar, no se culpe a l@s mexican@s por este brote. Que se investigue a la Smithfield y se tome acción contra los contaminadores.

Lo otro es que la presión de los bancos imperialistas durante los últimos 30 años ha forzado a los países pobres a recortar sus gastos para la salud pública. Esto no solamente ha debilitado el cuidado de la salud, sino que ha incrementado el peligro de pandemias. En vez de criminalizar a l@s trabajadores/as inmigrantes y militarizar la frontera con México, los Estados Unidos debía apoyar los esfuerzos de México para mejorar su sistema de salud, especialmente porque las corporaciones estadounidenses como la Smithfield están sacando enormes ganancias allí por la súper explotación de l@s trabajadores/as mexican@s.

Y el último punto es que el monopolio de medicinas nuevas que está en manos de unas pocas farmacéuticas privadas, impide el desarrollo de una fuente mundial de medicinas genéricas. Para el bien de la salud de la humanidad, la información médica debe ser compartida y todos los países deben ser libres de fabricar sus propias medicinas.

Todos estos puntos indican una sola conclusión: que el sistema capitalista entero es un obstáculo para proteger la vida y la salud de la humanidad cuando se enfrenta con la influenza porcina o con cualquier otra pandemia. □

Gripe porcina, puercos y ganancias

Por Hillel Cohen

El temor a una pandemia de gripe porcina se está extendiendo mucho más rápido que el mismo virus.

Aunque es muy temprano para decir cuán extensa y mortal será esta nueva variante del virus de la influenza, ha comenzando a surgir información sobre su posible origen. Una enorme granja de cerdos propiedad de la gigantesca corporación estadounidense Smithfield, operada por su subsidiaria mexicana Granjas Carroll de México, puede haber producido esta nueva amenaza a la salud pública.

L@s residentes de las localidades en los pueblos de La Gloria y el Perote en el estado de Veracruz han estado luchando contra esta granja gigantesca por años.

Produciendo cerca de un millón de cerdos anualmente, la compañía mantiene inmensas lagunas de estiércol al igual que un vertedero al aire libre para los restos descompuestos de los cerdos que han muerto antes de ser sacrificados. Los gases producidos por estos desperdicios contaminan el aire a millas de distancia y l@s residentes creen que el agua que toman puede estar contaminada. Enormes nubes de moscas que se alimentan de estos desperdicios están cerca de estos pueblos.

Es un hecho sabido que las moscas pueden esparcir la gripe aviaria al transportar material contaminado de los excrementos de aves infectadas. Es posible que las moscas que se alimentan de los excrementos de los cerdos, también estén en contacto con los excrementos de las aves y esto se haya convertido en el mecanismo para la mezcla de material viral de cerdos, aves y humanos que está ahora causando el brote.

Según reportajes del periódico mexicano La Jornada, l@s residentes locales trataron de evitar la construcción de la granja en el año 2005. Hace un año, vari@s activistas fueron arrestad@s por las autoridades de Veracruz, quienes han trabajado estrecha-

mente con las Granjas Carroll para ahogar la oposición a la granja.

Mucho antes de que el brote de influenza fuera divulgado por los noticieros internacionales, cientos de residentes de La Gloria ya se quejaban de severas infecciones respiratorias que en muchos casos se convertían en pulmonía. La pulmonía es una de las complicaciones más severas de la influenza. Veratect, una compañía privada estadounidense que sigue las epidemias de salud a nivel mundial, hace más de un mes notó este brote en Veracruz y notificó a la CDC (siglas en inglés), Centro para el Control de Enfermedades de Estados Unidos. Por estar atenta al supuesto e inexistente bioterrorismo, la CDC ignoró esa notificación por varias semanas.

El primer caso confirmado del nuevo virus porcino fue el de un niño de La Gloria, quien desde entonces se ha recuperado. La epidemia se ha esparcido a Ciudad México y a otras áreas de México al igual que a Nueva York, California, Texas y a otras ciudades en los Estados Unidos y en otras partes del mundo.

Hasta el momento de este artículo, de los 1500 casos que se han reportado en México por lo menos 150 han fallecido. Aunque los casos en Estados Unidos han sido leves hasta ahora, se han reportado una o dos muertes.

Oficiales de la salud creen que la cepa actual del virus es una mezcla de material genético de virus que infectan cerdos y aves al igual que a seres humanos. Por casi una década, oficiales de la salud en los EEUU y en el mundo se han enfocado en la influenza aviar, denominada como H5N1, que se ha extendido alrededor del mundo pero no ha “saltado” a la población humana. Aunque algunas personas contrajeron influenza aviar por su cercanía a aves de corral y acuáticas, ninguna transmisión de persona a persona ha sido reportada.

Esta nueva influenza porcina es una variación del H1N1, que es más común en la influenza humana. Ya está claro que se está trans-

mitiendo de persona a persona.

Como el mayor número de casos vino de México, algunos comentaristas derechistas de la red Fox ya han intentado culpar a l@s inmigrantes mexican@s de haber traído el virus a través de la frontera y pueden utilizar el miedo de la influenza porcina para provocar más hostilidad contra l@s inmigrantes.

El hecho de que los casos en EEUU parecen estar entre turistas de este país o personas allegadas a ést@s, ha limitado hasta ahora los ataques contra inmigrantes.

Hasta ahora, sin embargo, los medios de comunicación corporativos han prestado poca atención a la conexión de la empresa Smithfield o al hecho de que hay también iguales plantas enormes y peligrosas, en los estados de Carolina del Norte, Utah, y en otros lugares.

Un artículo en la revista Rolling Stone de 2006 estimó que sólo la empresa Smithfield produjo 26 millones de toneladas de desperdicios de animales al año, el subproducto de más de \$11 mil millones en ventas. Los llamados acuerdos de “libre comercio” como el TLCAN han facilitado el que empresas gigantes como la Smithfield establezcan sus plantas peligrosas en México con poca o ninguna regulación, en detrimento de la población local.

¿Se le exigirá responsabilidad a éstos criminales corporativos que se han beneficiado de este desastre ambiental y de salud pública?

Cohen es doctor de salud pública.

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